

UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000908

SIPDIS

State for AF, AF/E, AF/PD; Casablanca for David Strawman  
Transmitting Station Tangier

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAQ PGOV SCUL DJ BBG

SUBJECT: Somali-Language Radio, A Missed Opportunity?

**¶1.** (U) SUMMARY: Recent conversations with Djiboutian youth have revealed their marked preferences for receiving information in a traditional news format via radio and their heavy reliance on BBC Somali for their world and regional news. This information has important implications for methods of news delivery in the Horn of Africa and underscores the unexploited opportunity available to the U.S. through Somali language radio programming. END SUMMARY

**¶2.** (U) The topic at this week's Post-sponsored English conversation groups has been "How do Djiboutians get their information?" An overwhelming majority of the participants said that they prefer a news format to "softer" formatting techniques such as music or theater. In addition nearly all of the participants said that they spend at least 10 hours per week listening to BBC Somali.

**¶3.** (U) When discussing how people without radios get their news, students said that word- of-mouth most certainly plays a role in the districts, the regions of Somaliland and Ethiopia that they visit for holiday, and the poorer areas of the city, but that much of that word-of-mouth also comes from BBC Somali. Local newspapers and television also play a lesser, but notable, role.

**¶4.** (U) The Post-sponsored English language conversation groups continue to be a great success in Djibouti. The groups are currently active in five English night schools throughout the city and six more schools are on a wait list. About 130 youth ages 16-25 participate in the groups each week and discuss civic topics with native speakers from the Embassy and US military. The Embassy also provides copies of VOA Special English articles or transcripts to each of the students on subjects related to the conversation topic. The groups continue to be important aspect of PD's hearts and minds campaign and a venue for sharing the US message while simultaneously providing important insights into Djiboutian culture and attitudes.